

For immediate release
March 17, 2005

**PAYMENT OF MEXICO'S RIO GRANDE WATER DEBT,
LOWER RIO GRANDE CONSERVATION EASEMENTS,
BROWNSVILLE-MATAMOROS WEIR
ON AGENDA FOR APRIL 4 PUBLIC MEETING**

The United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) has scheduled a public meeting of its Lower Rio Grande Citizens' Forum (LRGCF) on April 4 at 4:00 p.m. in the Hoblitzelle Auditorium of the Texas A & M Agricultural Research and Extension Center, 2415 E. Highway 83 in Weslaco, Texas. The purpose of the LRGCF is to facilitate the exchange of information between the USIBWC and members of the public about Commission activities in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

USIBWC Principal Engineer Carlos Marin will provide information about the recent understanding between Mexico and the United States for Mexico to pay its Rio Grande water debt by September 2005. The understanding provides for water transfers as well as additional deliveries in order to pay off the entire debt. As of October 1, 2004, Mexico's deficit stood at 716,670 acre-feet.

Under the 1944 Water Treaty, Mexico is to deliver to the United States an annual average of 350,000 acre-feet in the Rio Grande basin in cycles of five years. Since 1992, Mexico has accumulated a water deficit, which reached a high of more than 1.5 million acre-feet in 2002. In addition to the deliveries to pay off the water debt, Mexico will continue to deliver sufficient water to meet its obligations for the current water cycle.

In other business, USIBWC Environmental Engineer Sylvia Waggoner will discuss efforts to acquire property easements for a wildlife corridor along the Commission's Lower Rio

Grande Flood Control Project. The agency is working to obtain conservation easements in order to comply with guidance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to protect threatened and endangered species along the flood control project. Survey work related to this effort is already underway.

The meeting will also include an update by John S. Bruciak, General Manager and CEO of the Brownsville Public Utilities Board (PUB), about Brownsville-Matamoros Weir discussions with Mexico. The Brownsville PUB is working with the International Boundary and Water Commission, the City of Matamoros, and Mexico's National Water Commission to develop a bi-national effort to construct the weir on the Rio Grande. The purpose of the project is to conserve water resources in the Lower Rio Grande in a cost-effective manner by constructing and operating an on-channel reservoir that will capture and store excess river flow and help provide a long-term water supply for the area.

A complete meeting agenda appears below. Members of the public who would like more information can contact the USIBWC's Lower Rio Grande Project Office at 956-565-3150.

For more information:

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LOWER RIO GRANDE CITIZENS' FORUM

Monday, April 4, 2005

4:00 - 6:00 P.M.

Hoblitzelle Auditorium
Texas A & M Agricultural Research and Extension Center
2415 E. Highway 83
Weslaco, Texas

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions - Neil Haman, Co-Chair
- Update on the Brownsville-Matamoros Weir - John S. Bruciak, General Manager and CEO, Brownsville Public Utilities Board
- Payment of Mexico's Rio Grande Water Debt - Carlos Marin, Principal Engineer, USIBWC
- Wildlife Corridor Easement Acquisition along the Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project - Sylvia Waggoner, Environmental Engineer, USIBWC
- Recognition of Board Members - Carlos Marin, Principal Engineer, USIBWC
- Public Comment
- Board Discussion, Suggested Future Agenda Items

If you have a disability that you wish to self-identify confidentially that requires accommodation, please advise us ahead of time.

For more information, call 956-565-3150 or e-mail sallyspener@ibwc.state.gov.